



## Post-Hurricane Considerations for the Commercial Nursery



This publication contains suggestions for operators of hurricane-damaged nurseries regarding re-establishment of physical resources such as buildings, plant inventory and equipment, as well as considerations regarding future fiscal or business decisions.

Each nursery operator must evaluate his or her own situation after a hurricane and quickly decide on long- and short-term priorities. The needs of employees must be considered and resources provided so that nursery personnel can concentrate on re-establishing the nursery.

### Short-Term Considerations

#### Irrigation

Irrigation of salvageable plants containerized or planted after the hurricane is a short-term priority. Water resources suddenly become even more valuable after a hurricane because of possible contamination with salt water, and the difficulty in delivering water to plants via damaged or destroyed irrigation systems.

It seems ironic that too much water contributes to destruction one day, yet within a few days irrigation water may be difficult to obtain. However, the irrigation water at your nursery may not be contaminated by salt water blown into surface reservoirs or by salt water intrusion of wells.

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Adapted by UF/IFAS from:  
*Document DH-097,*  
*IFAS Disaster Handbook for*  
*Extension Agents* (developed  
by the Cooperative Extension  
Service for the benefit of  
Florida's citizens)

Water with an electrical conductivity of 1.5 to 2 dS/m (mmhos/cm) should be marginally suited for irrigation of most nursery crops; however, the conductivity of the container medium should be monitored periodically even if water with 1 dS/m conductivity is used. Container-medium electrical conductivities of 1 to 1.5 dS/m are considered optimal.

Temporary pipes, such as aluminum pipes, can be laid overland and water delivered via large irrigation guns if the nursery

irrigation piping system was destroyed. Electric generators or petroleum pumps can be used to pump the water.

### Disaster Assistance

Contact your insurance agents and apply for disaster assistance. In addition to insurance settlements, assistance is available from the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) and Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Assistance is also available from the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA).

Property damage should be documented with photographs or video. If possible, include an identifier in the photographs. The identifier associates the damage with your nursery. A house or barn in the background of a picture could be an identifier. In addition, you may want to include an insurance agent or other persons in photographs; these people can verify your claims.

Assess your inventory while placing plants upright so you can account for plants that are not only nonsalable but also those that were lost from the property. Some plants may recover while others may die in a few days or weeks. Therefore, do not settle claims immediately, but ask for a partial settlement initially.

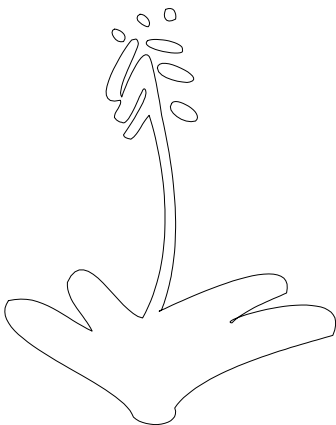
Claiming loss for physical structures and equipment is usually obvious, but also consider damage to supply inventories such as containers, fertilizers and pesticides. Check to see if fertilizers or pesticides were mixed or damaged. Consider insurance claims for the replacement of those items as well as disposal and clean-up.

### Plant Culture

Short-term production efforts concentrate on removing plants from flooded areas, providing shade where needed, and preparing inventory for sale. Compact, low growing plants generally survive a hurricane with less damage than more upright plants. Damaged plants may need pruning or shaping. Wind-defoliated plants should generate new leaves within a few weeks.

Nurseries that grow plants in field soil should sample the soil to determine if salt levels could result in plant damage. Irrigation water should have an electrical conductivity of less than 2 dS/m when used to mitigate salts in the field soils.

Future sales should be good because plants in many landscapes will need to be replaced. Therefore, a short-term consideration is to



purchase young plants that will be grown for future sales. Another option is to purchase mature plants for rewholesaling. Both options will increase volume or inventory for future sales, but additional employees may be needed for a limited time. In addition, land and equipment may also be leased.

## Long-Term Considerations

Long-term priorities should concentrate on the direction or focus of the nursery for the future. Now is the time to consider changes you thought about in the past and would implement only if you had the opportunity to do something over, but proceed carefully. Develop a business plan considering future markets. For example, you may change the predominant size of marketable plants or add additional cultivars to penetrate a new market, such as plants for water-conserving landscapes.

Also, consider advancements in technology, and make changes based on recent research-based information. Ask yourself these questions:

- Can low volume irrigation be used?
- Are irrigation runoff recovery ponds and systems for recycling water needed?
- Do fuel and pesticide storage and pesticide waste facilities comply with current guidelines?

Your County Extension office has numerous resources that will help you select and implement technological advancements appropriate for your nursery. Now is the time to make changes for a prosperous and rewarding future!

